

GamerZines

ISSUE 04 | MAY 2013

FirstLook

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IN-DEPTH PREVIEW

METRO LAST LIGHT

MET LAST



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RO LIGHT



WELCOME TO FirstLook



The words 'first-person shooter' have been dragged through the mud over the past few years. Series like *Call of Duty*, *Killzone*, and *Battlefield* have helped to spread the notion that gamers don't want their minds

stimulated when shooting foes in the head – only their trigger finger. It wasn't always this way, back in the days of *Half-Life*, *System Shock* and *Deus Ex* players relished a mental workout, and with efforts like *Metro: Last Light*, *Dishonored* and *BioShock Infinite* there's a feeling that the 'multiplayer first, single-player second' era is coming to an end, and frankly we couldn't be happier about it.

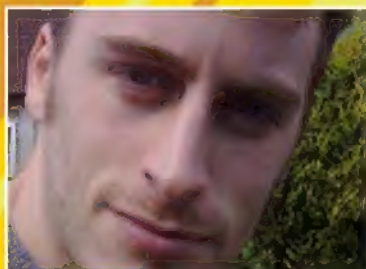
Multiplayer isn't going away, and neither should it, but with multiplayer-centric titles like *GRID 2*, *Company of Heroes II* and *Battlefield 4* looking to give their campaign's more meaning, it's clear that developers not only want to create great games, but also tell stories which linger in the public psyche, and that's certainly a good thing.

Enjoy the issue!

Andy Griffiths, Editor
FIRSTLOOK@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

Still picking over
some delectable
pre-orders...



Andy Griffiths
Always in the motor racing mood.

Don't miss!
*This month's
top highlights!*



**METRO:
LAST LIGHT**



**METAL GEAR
SOLID V**



**CIVILIZATION V:
BRAVE NEW
WORLD**



GRID 2



**What we know for sure
about BATTLEFIELD 4**



**Lessons to be learnt from
BIOSHOCK INFINITE**

QUICK FINDER



Killer is Dead
Poker Night 2
Battlefield 4
Civilization V:
Brave New World
GRID 2
BioShock Infinite
Pre-Order
Must Haves

Metal Gear
Solid V: The
Phantom Pain
Metro: Last Light
Company of
Heroes 2
Dead Island:
Riptide
DLC and UGC
Round-up

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DARK



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Out 14th June

www.getintothedark.com PC 

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**"One of the most surprising titles
at Gamescom 2012"**



- Hooked Gamers

**"DARK looks to make the
stealth genre cool again"**

- Gamercast



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PREVIEW



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KILLER IS DEAD

PUB: DEEP SILVER
DEV: GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE
PLATFORMS: XBOX 360, PLAYSTATION 3
ETA: SUMMER

QUINTESSENTIALLY SUDA

Talk of the Japan's declining relevance in the game development scene is increasingly common nowadays. *Megaman* creator Keiji Inafune keeps weighing in on the subject ensuring it stays in the headlines, but in our minds some of the best games still come from the East. Case in point, Grasshopper Manufacture and their creative force Goichi Suda, more commonly known as 'SUDA 51'.

The next game from the wonderfully twisted mind behind *Shadows of the Damned*, *No More Heroes* and *Killer 7* stars an assassin named Mondo Zappa who is tasked with killing competitors

and criminals from across the world by a powerful conglomerate.

The premise sounds serious, but as this is game comes from Grasshopper, players should expect lots of cheeky humour, plenty of pop culture references, mucho Samurai sword-laden set-pieces and a soundtrack composed by Suda's long-time collaborator Akira Yamaoka.

Unlike a surprising number of Suda's other releases, *Killer is Dead* will definitely be released in Europe, and both Japanese and English voice tracks will feature in the final build. Japan is still very relevant to the modern games era, and this release will help prove it. ■



CITIES ⁱⁿ MOTION[®]



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paradox
INTERACTIVE

PREVIEW

METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

PUB: KONAMI
DEV: KONAMI PRODUCTIONS
PLATFORMS: PC, XBOX 360,
PLAYSTATION 3
ETA: TBA

THE RETURN OF BIG BOSS

Nobody does crazy like Kojima, but frankly with the beloved *Metal Gear Solid* series we wouldn't expect anything else.

Consisting of two standalone parts, *The Phantom Pain* and *Ground Zeroes* (both of which will be sold separately), *MGS V* takes place during the 20-year fiction gap between *Peace Walker* and the original *Metal Gear* (1974-1995). What does this all mean? Well, players assume the role of Solid Snake's genetic father Big Boss after he awakens from a nine-year

coma and works with McDonnell Miller to form a new paramilitary group in order to fight off the impending danger of nuclear war. Look, we don't know what all this means either, but since when has a convoluted plot stopped you from enjoying *Metal Gear*?

MGS V will utilise Konami's shiny new FOX Engine and will feature a nifty army management mechanic to spice up the traditional stealth and cut-scene-laden gameplay. Welcome back Kojima, we have missed you. ■

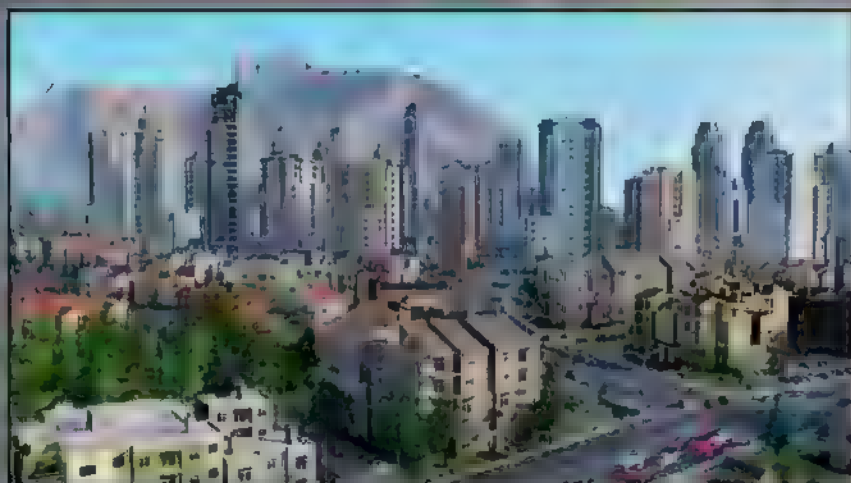




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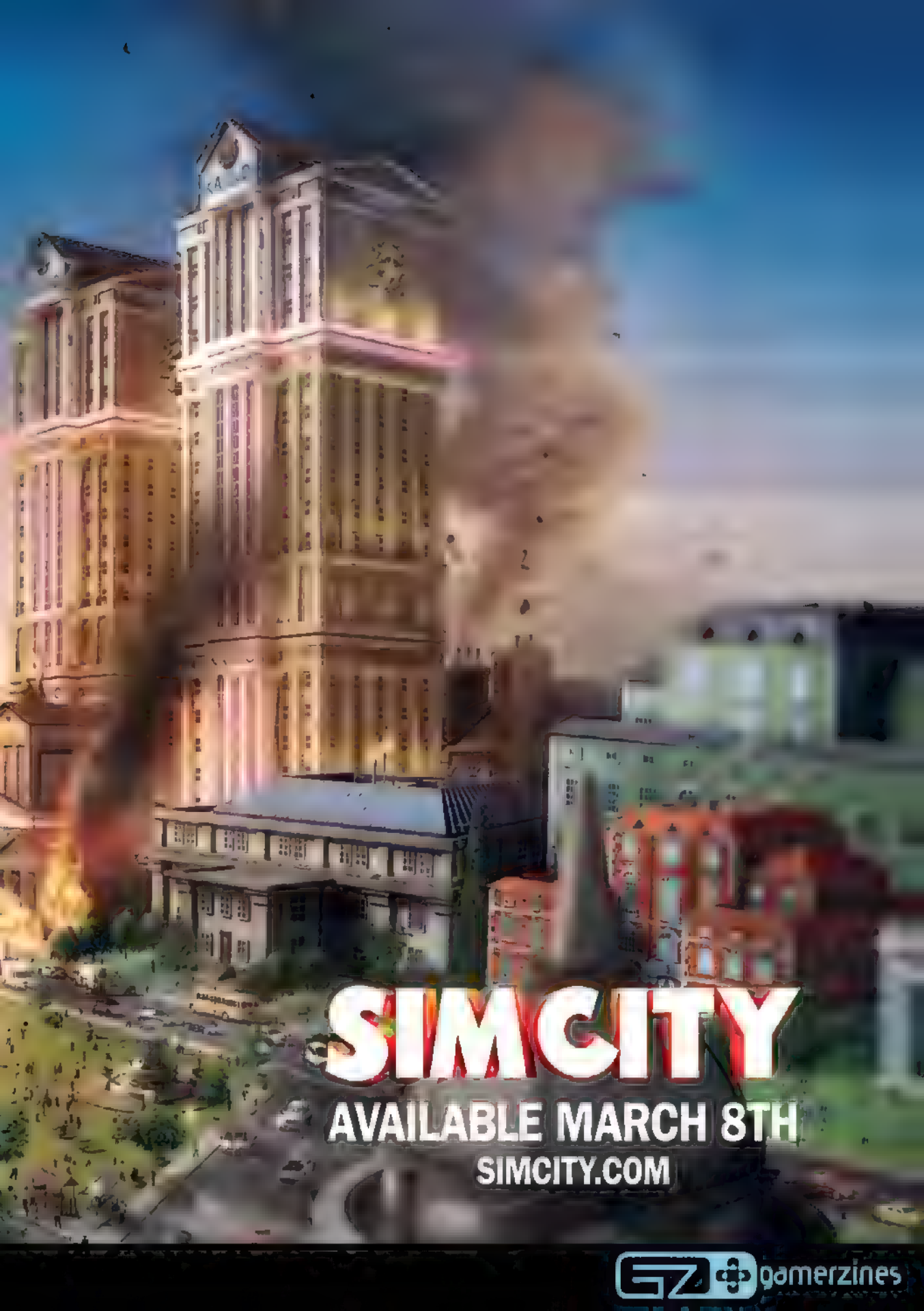


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SIMCITY

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PREVIEW

Brock

Claptrap

POKER NIGHT II

PUB: TELLTALE GAMES

DEV: IN-HOUSE

PLATFORMS: PC, XBOX 360,

PLAYSTATION 3

ETA: END OF APRIL

TELLTALE RAISE THE STAKES

Despite being hard at work on *The Walking Dead: Season Two*, Telltale apparently has enough resources handy to produce yet another celebrity poker game, *Poker Night II*. The previous game featured *Penny Arcade's* Tycho, Max from *Sam & Max*, Heavy Weapons Guy from *Team Fortress 2* and Strong Bad from *Hornstar Runner*, and in the sequel Telltale are going for a similarly eclectic roster.

Poker Night II features Max from *Sam & Max*, Brock Samson from *Adult Swim's The Venture Bros.* and Ash Williams from *Army of Darkness* as fellow competitors

you have to knock out in a high stakes Poker tournament run by *Portal's* GLaDOS. Like last time, players will be able to unlock exclusive gear for use in *Team Fortress 2* (PC only), but unlike last time this series is coming to consoles with all versions of the game unlocking elaborate gear for use in *Borderlands 2*.

Two variants of Poker feature, Texas Hold 'em and Omaha, and there's no support for multiplayer. Instead Telltale simply want players to enjoy their time with these characters, wager some high stakes and enjoy some witty banter. Sounds like a good night out to us. ■

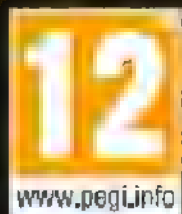


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NEW AND RETURNING PLAYERS!

RIFTGAME.COM/EN/LITE

LEVELS 1-20

NO CREDIT CARD REQUIRED

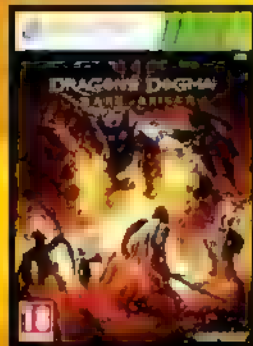
NO TIME LIMIT

DRAGON'S DOGMA: DARK ARISEN

Capcom give their answer to Skyrim a second chance

With games like *Super Street Fighter 4*, *Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3* and *Dead Rising 2: Off the Record*, Capcom has a long record of re-releasing old games with new features barely a year after they first hit shelves. With beat-'em-ups this formula works rather well as it's a bit like taking in community feedback to balance a brawler better, but with story-driven games or in *Dragon's Dogma's* case, fantasy RPGs that's a bit of a harder sell. Regardless

Dark Arisen is still getting a lot of garnishing a lot of excitement around the Internet, as it seems a lot of players missed *Dragon's Dogma* when it arrived first time around. The refreshed re-release features all the content from the original game plus DLC in addition to new quests, environments to explore, customisation items and enemies. Priced at only £19.99 as well, *Dark Arisen* fits nicely into that budget price category.



PUB: CAPCOM
DEV: N.HOUSE
PLATFORM: PC, PS3, XBOX 360
ETA: 26TH SEPTEMBER



GRAND THEFT AUTO V

PUB: ROCKSTAR GAMES
PLATFORM: XBOX 360, PS3
ETA: 17TH SEPTEMBER

We all should resign ourselves to the fact that *Grand Theft Auto V* will be topping 'Must Have Games' lists from now until release day. Thankfully the emergence of Rockstar's next open-world game isn't too far

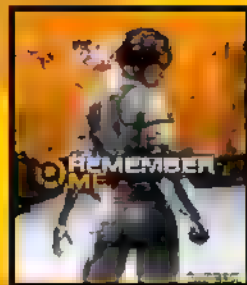
off, and the studio has lots of reveals planned for forthcoming months. For April, they decided to reveal *GTA V's* final box art and it looks nice. Very *GTA*, and a little predictable to be sure, but nice nonetheless.

REMEMBER ME

PUB: CAPCOM
DEV: DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT
PLATFORM: XBOX 360, PS3
ETA: 17TH SEPTEMBER

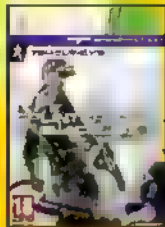
The one-time PS3 exclusive *Remember Me* has been picked up by Capcom and it looks rather good. The cyberpunk third-person action game stars Nilin, an insomnia-suffering 'memory

hunter', who has the ability to steal memories from others. It's easy to get a *Prototype*-vibe from this release, but DontNod's debut game is much more stylish and story-driven.



SPLINTER CELL BLACKLIST

PUB: UBI SOFT
DEV: UBI SOFT TORONTO
PLATFORM: X360 PS3 PC Wii
ETA: 23RD AUGUST

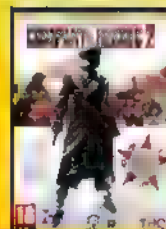


So the UK isn't getting the North American super special edition with its R/C recon plane, but that doesn't matter. The good news is that we finally have a release date for this

sequel/reboot, with Sam Fisher reforming Third Echelon to once again thwart an attack on American soil. As long as Sam has his patented tri-goggles he'll probably be alright.

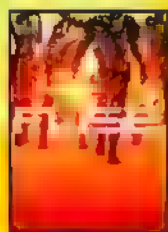
PUB: SEGA
DEV: RELIC ENTERTAINMENT
PLATFORM: PC
ETA: JUNE

COMPANY OF HEROES 2



THQ are dead, but that doesn't mean the publisher's finest spoils have been left to rot. Case in point, *Company of Heroes 2*, which now has a release date thanks to SEGA picking

up Relic Entertainment during the liquidation madness. Set some time aside in June boys and girls, as you'll be too busy playing this RTS to want to do anything else.



FUSE

PUB: ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEV: NINE AC GAMES
PLATFORM: PS3 XBOX 360
ETA: SUMMER

Don't let the headless boxart fool you, as *FUSE* is a co-op game bursting with personality and originality. Starring four distinct archetypes, this new shooter from the makers

of *Resistance* features a shadowy agency trying to use alien tech for their own nefarious needs. Expect colourful environments and the craziest weapons ever seen.

ANIMAL CROSSING



PUB: NINTENDO
DEV: NINTENDO
HOUSE
PLATFORM: 3DS
ETA: 14TH JUNE

Someone in the *FirstLook* offices finally got around to buying a Nintendo 3DS and to shut this man-child up we decided to put *Animal Crossing: New Leaf* in our must haves section. What makes this version of the life sim different? Players are now Mayors of the village they're a part of and can swim. Yep we don't know why he's so excited either.

PLAYSTATION 4



PUB: SONY
DEV: SONY
ETA: END OF 2013

Sony finally unveiled the PS4 last month, and understandably a lot of retailers are trying to cash in on that hype, even though the final launch date or price has yet to be confirmed for the console. Sure you can put your money down early to avoid disappointment, but bear in mind retailers know as little as you do about the PS4.

LEVIATHAN™ WARSHIPS



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7 THINGS WE KNOW FOR SURE ABOUT...

BATTLEFIELD 4

The problem is a franchise gets the stranger and more defensive those in charge get about any information (regardless how confidential) being released into the public space in a moment before it's ready. This unfortunate state of affairs is true of film, books, comics, cartoons and due to the incredible development costs associated with our medium, is undoubtedly true of games as well. From teaser art to big reveals and eventual hands-on sessions, publishers of all sizes and reputations handle every informative morsel about an upcoming game with a perilous amount of care, in order to ensure that whatever features revealed gets the most amount of attention possible. At least that's the way it usually works.

When we saw *Battlefield 4* for the first time during its pan-continental reveal at both the Games Developer Conference in San Francisco and an understated theatre in Stockholm, both EA and DICE were surprisingly forthright regarding a lot of information about the next entry in the

award-winning shooter series.

As you would expect, not every single facet of *Battlefield 4* was up for discussion (regrettably any talk of multiplayer or next generation platforms was completely off the table) but we did get to learn a lot about what is driving the development

"Both EA and DICE were surprisingly forthright regarding a lot of information about the next entry in the award-winning shooter series."

of the FPS sequel and, most surprisingly of all, what DICE are calling an "intense" and "character-driven" campaign. Here's are seven indisputable factoids/nuggets which we know about *Battlefield 4* so far.

1. BRAND NEW 'FROSTBITE 3' ENGINE

If you're one of the millions of unfortunate gamers who only ever played *Battlefield 3* on a console, you probably don't have much of an idea of how powerful the Frostbite 2 engine really is. Boasting destructible environments and a load of special particle effects, with the right graphics card Frostbite 2 could produce stunning visuals. Frostbite 3 takes that visual prowess further, with a vastly improved lighting system, character models which boast higher facial texture fidelity than its predecessor and much more realistic physics simulation.

Destructible environments also make a return in Frostbite 3. DICE has been working on this new engine since 2011 – directly after the release of *Battlefield 3* – and the studio states that like with previous Frostbite engines, other EA studios will also have access to this new technology. Don't bet against the next *Mass Effect* or *Bioshock* (if there is one) utilising this impressive engine.



2. PESKY RUSSIAN PREMISE

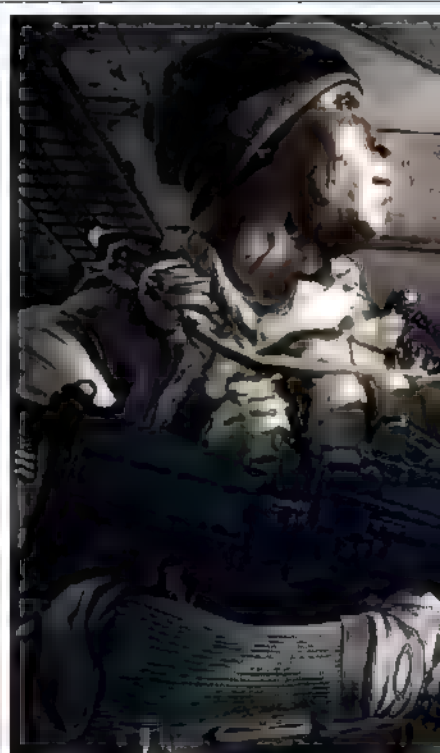
Despite DICE repeatedly mentioning that they have aspirations to tell a "dramatic" and "believable" story in *Battlefield 4*,

they seemed oddly reluctant to detail the exact nature of the single-player campaign's premise. The prologue mission we were shown during the initial reveal was titled 'Fishing in Baku' and featured a four-man squad of American soldiers fighting Russian forces in Azerbaijan. Why the battle is taking place wasn't revealed, but we suspect another 'Cold War turned Hot' scenario à la *Call of Duty*. We really hope that there's a bit more to it than that though.



3. A 'PERSONAL' NARRATIVE

DICE don't seem to want to reveal anything regarding much of the new *Battlefield* campaign, which seems set to boast more characterisation than before, thanks to the narrative focus on a single squad fighting for survival. DICE has cast the role of protagonist to Rekker, who is sent to war with his three fellow soldiers – Irish, Pac and Duggan – to fight alive in an intensive new conflict. Judging from the characterisation in *Battlefield 4*'s Game Director's Cut, Strandberg, it's clear that DICE are putting more emphasis on character evaluation this time around. Whether it pays off or not, the campaign should at least provide more context to the characters than the previous game.



4. SQUAD-PLAY

Rather than hopping into the skin of different armed forces and characters, *Battlefield 4*'s campaign will focus purely on the exploits of a single squad. This new squad-focus also ties into game play as well, as players can now tag enemies and give orders to their team, like firing at specific enemies during combat. This system didn't seem anywhere near as advanced as *Brothers in Arms*, but players will be able to use their squad-mates as tools facilitating different ways to engage enemies.

What is clear is that DICE are looking to make players care about the characters that surround them, with specific story beats like cutting off a soldier's leg to free him from wreckage, designed to prompt players to care about their AI partners. Whether these moments actually have the desired effect remains to be seen, but DICE are going for an approach which lacks any kind of gore or real gritty drama. The set-piece we referred to earlier about the protagonist cutting off his squad-mate's leg involved zero blood and minimal drama, with Rekker simply amputating an entire leg at the knee with a quick swipe of a small knife. *The Walking Dead* this certainly ain't.



5. IMPROVED BATTLELOG

DICE also revealed that for the first time campaign performance will be relayed into Battlefield's *Battlelog* portal, with players accruing performance points in accordance with how well they do in missions. This all updates in real-time and is supported by new HUD elements in-game which show the player how many of their friends are online, and what achievements they've accomplished most recently. A small, but noteworthy inclusion.





6. BRINGING MULTIPLAYER MOMENTS INTO SINGLE-PLAYER

Usually reveal event presentations are laden with needless buzzwords and slogans, and the *Battlefield 4* showcase certainly wasn't short of them. One of the most common ones muttered throughout the evening was "Bringing multiplayer moments into single-player." What do DICE mean by this strange marketing concoction? Simple, they want to expand the traditional linear, corridor-like campaign experience to include grand outdoor set-pieces, allowing players to make choices, choose when to engage enemies and utilise vehicles such as boats, cars, jet skis and jets. Art Director Gustav Tilleby even tossed around terms like "sandbox," "dynamic" and "freedom" in order to describe *Battlefield 4*'s single-player environments, so players should expect a much more unrestricted feel with greater freedom of movement than *Battlefield 3*. This was proven during the live gameplay demo (shown on the right) with proceedings moving from tight corridors to a grand construction site wasteland. Here's hoping this marketing term is backed up by more than just a few set-pieces.

7. RELEASE DATE AND NEXT GEN

Despite boasting the bleeding-edge Frostbite 3 engine, Electronic Arts and DICE confirmed that *Battlefield 4* will be released this autumn for PC, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. The live feed demo we were shown was undoubtedly running on next-generation hardware but, we're imagining that the PlayStation 4 and whatever piece of plastic Microsoft are cooking up also fits neatly into EA's *Battlefield* pipeline. We'll find out more over the coming months, but until then, feast your eyes on the 17-minute gameplay demo we have for you below.



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PREVIEW

CIVILIZATION V: BRAVE NEW WORLD

HANDS-ON

CIVILIZATION

PUB: 2K GAMES

DEV: FIRAXIS

LAST GAME:

CIVILIZATION V: BRAVE
NEW WORLD

PLATFORMS: PC

ETA: JULY 12TH

Clash of Cultures

The grand strategy sequel *Civilization V* turns three this September, yet Firaxis are still working hard on pumping out new content for their unique franchise which charts humanity's earliest beginnings to its inevitable tumultuous end. If the previous expansion *Gods & Kings* was all about improving the first half of a playthrough, the second expansion *Brave New World* is all about making the latter half more complex by

opening up more ways for players to be aggressive without actually parking tanks on their next door neighbour's front lawn. *Civilization's* end-game is about to get a lot sneakier, and that's all thanks to an increased emphasis on tourism and trade. A word of warning though, this preview is going to get a bit technical, but bear with us.

Making money from commodities isn't exactly the most attractive aspect of this series, but

Shaku of the Zulu is just of nine new playable factions heading to *Civilization V*. Veterans of this series will remember how aggressive this character can be



FirstLook | Preview

"Gods & Kings was all about improving the first half of a playthrough, the second expansion Brave New World is all about making the latter half more complex"



PREVIEW

World Congress Founders



Portugal has discovered every Civilization in the world. To commemorate this occurrence, leaders from around the world will meet together in the First Congress of Lisbon to 30 times to discuss the future of the world.

This list:

- 2 Delegates for Imperialism
- 1 Delegate for Global City-State
- 10 Delegates per City-State

Next list:

- 4 Delegates for best Civilization
- 2 Delegates for other Civilizations
- 1 Delegates per City-State

Close

The leader of the UN victory condition is still applicable in this expansion, but it appears much harder to achieve than before.

Culture Progress

UNESCO Cultural Heritage Sites

Trade Progress

Global Progress

Brave New World overhauls the existing trade system making it much easier to manage. Trade is now directly tied to units rather than roads, with caravans and cargo ships boasting new auto trade functionality. This nifty new ability allows 30-turn long trade-routes to be established with any city in a unit's given range, with gold yield shown to players before a route is formed. Players can also use this functionality to ship food and production resources around their own city network to encourage growth in

otherwise struggling urban centres. Firaxis hasn't made it all easy for the player though. Trade units don't have any line of sight when it comes to

"Culture and tourism has also gone through a dramatic transformation"

exploring the game world, so when a snip or trader marches into the cloud of fog, the landscape stays cloudy and units are liable to get ambushed by



SCENARIOS

In addition to adding new mechanics to the main game, Firaxis are also adding two new historical scenarios with the *Brave New World* expansion. The first is based around the American Revolution and the second revolves around the Scramble for Africa during the 19th Century. As you'd expect, a lot of time has been spent on making both these scenarios as historically accurate as possible, with the archaeologist unit and unit-based trade mechanic brought in specifically to make these standalone challenges feel authentic. Expect more new inclusions to be revealed closer to launch.



INTERVIEW

LEARNINGS FROM

Executive Producer

From the outset at least it seems the whole design ethos behind this expansion is geared towards fixing *Civ V*'s end-game. Do you think it was something that needed fixing?

Fixing isn't the right word for it. We've never accomplished a compelling end-game in *Civ III*, *Civ IV*, or *Civ V* – where the end-game was as interesting as the beginning of the game. We just never found the right formula, so we decided to just tackle it head-on with *Brave New World*. So far so good, in terms of playtests it seems as though it's starting to accomplish what we're looking for. This new content makes the player look forward to the end-game just as much as they look forward to starting a new playthrough.

marauding Barbarians or other factions. Inevitably sales of any commodities will increase the further units travel, but with that promise of more gold also comes an increased risk of attack – it's a subtle balancing act. All this functionality may sound a little dull, but automating trade frees players up to think about more exciting things during a turn and means that creating workable trade routes is a doddle.

HEARTS AND MINDS

Culture and tourism has also gone through a similarly dramatic transformation, with the cultural victory condition completely overhauled. Players can no longer achieve a cultural victory by simply researching and completing five different culture trees. Culture is now about winning hearts and minds on the global stage, with tourism proving a key tool in world domination. The more tourism you can attract, via wonders and something Firaxis call 'Great Works', the greater opportunity you have to influence ➤

We've dug around in the code for about an hour and we're still finding new stuff, like the archaeologist who can find artefacts in other lands and bring them back to your civilisation. Would you say this expansion also gives players a lot of new sneaky ways to get the better of other players or factions?

Absolutely, it is more sneaky. There's more reasons for Civs to like or hate you, and if you steal their tech they will yell at you about that – "Get off my lawn, stop taking my stuff!" That combined with the World Congress and knowing what resolutions are going to make Civs happy and what's going to make them angry – being able to interact by paying people off or trading for those votes. All those things really mimic the 80s and 90s and show that diplomacy was more important than war at that particular time.

It's interesting that you guys decided to gloss over the League of Nations in preference of the World Congress and eventually the United Nations. What were the reasons behind that?

We had it at one point, where we went from Congress of Vienna to League of Nations and then United Nations, but then we thought that was going to get really confusing, so we just needed a word for this whole thing so we decided on World Congress and then when it switches to the United Nations you know the race for the diplomatic victory is on!

How much do you toy around with the idea of the UN and what it may become in the future?

Not a lot. We leave it at its height of power which is maybe five or six years ago when it was handing out trade sanctions and being a generally relevant body. In our game all sanctions have to be followed no matter what – they



other nations. Culture buildings like amphitheatres, museums and opera houses all have slots which can be filled with great works to help attract travellers to your kingdom. These great works can only be created by great historical figures which appear sporadically in your empire.

Shakespeare, Beethoven, Fitzgerald and Grieg all feature, each with their own unique works like *The Great Gatsby* and *Hall of the Mountain King*. We experienced a strange sense of ownership as our empire guiding efforts allowed *The Tragedy of Hamlet* to come into being. We aren't saying Willy wouldn't have been able to produce the play without us, but we certainly helped.

The increased relevance of culture ties directly into the new World Congress mechanic, which can

completely change the way the end-game plays out. Acting a lot like the modern-day UN, The World Congress is founded by a single civilisation when they manage to research the printing press and meet every other faction in any given

"Resolutions have the potential to last an entire playthrough"

game, so it is possible for this new mechanic to kick in fairly early. At this congress of all nations, the faction with the highest cultural rating and the host nation get to vote on new game-changing policies, with every faction able to vote on resolutions. Resolutions include establishing a World's Fair to encourage trade, a



The Archaeologist unit can dig up relics from previous battles, regardless of their location in the world, and bring them back to your museums for a quick culture boost. Don't expect your allies to be happy about that though

standing army tax to make warmongering more costly, technology share initiatives, and trade embargoes to restrict the growth of a particularly affluent or aggressive nation. These are just some of the resolutions available, and it isn't hard to see their potential tide-turning consequences. Essentially rule changers/modifiers, resolutions have the potential to last an entire playthrough, unless another civilisation proposes a plan to revoke them during the next World Congress. Needless to say, players will need to think about their propositions and all-important vote very carefully. Interestingly when you hover over a potential resolution, factions who would support it are revealed to the player immediately, so it's easy to get a good idea of what policies are ➤

INTERVIEW

become die-hard game rules. We toyed around with the idea of letting people ignore them and making people angry, but that created a lot of problems. Why would you want to play with the UN if other players have the option to ignore their decrees? We don't cover what could be in the future for the UN, instead it's more along the lines of what people have experienced.

What's also interesting about this expansion is that it's coming just a couple of months shy of *Civilisation V*'s three-year launch anniversary. Do you anticipate new players coming into this game for the first time with this expansion?

It's done really well so far, especially when our game is part of a Steam sale. Our sales for the base game go through the roof every single time, because the word got out when we released *Gods & Kings*. The attach rate for it was really good, better than any of our other expansions, because it was a very solid game and the modes it added made *Civ V* a whole new game. All of a sudden we had a lot of die-hard *Civ IV* players diving into *Civ V*, and we're really hoping that same thing will happen again. *Brave New World* is adding some really great gameplay and we hope to rehash that.

The rule that we always have at Firaxis is that the games have to stand the test of time. A game has to be replayable from here to eternity. We want to still see people playing *Civ III*, *Civ IV* and *Civ V*. There was that article a few months ago that focused on one gamer playing the same save game from *Civ II* for years and years. That's the sort of thing we really strive for.

That kind of mindset must make it really difficult to decide when the time is right to stop making content for one game and jump wholesale into making a sequel. Do you guys have a definitive end-point in mind for these expansions, or do you just keep making them as fans request them?

It's a combination of the two. There will always come a point, like there was with *Civ IV*'s *Beyond the Sword*, where we felt we offered a complete experience, and if you try to jam any more in there you almost tip over the edge and offer too much. That's what we're shooting for with *Brave New World*, as we want this expansion to really round out and complete the *Civ V* experience. Whether that changes is unknown, but that's what we're focusing on. We want this to be the essential *Civ V* experience.

Firaxis is a very important PC developer, but with the multi-format success of *XCOM* the studio has also become an important part of the console equation as well. Would you be willing to give *Civilization* on consoles another try?

Possibly, but the PC is part of the *Civilization* franchise's DNA. It's just the layers of complexity you have in a game like *Civ*, we don't feel it's necessarily right for consoles. You've got *Civilization Revolution*, which was definitely streamlined and a whole different experience – made for the console – but

PREVIEW

Every Great Work featured in this expansion is shown in one manner or another be it via some text, a picture or a short MP3 file



easier to pass than others. Votes on any given policy take place over 10 turns, and just like in the real-world UN, leaders can use their influence and exert pressure on their rivals via diplomacy.

Having played around with the new World Congress mechanic, it's clear that this inclusion will have massive consequences in mixing up *Civilization V*'s usually predictable end-game. With this system it'll be possible for other factions to gang up on the perceived strongest player, warmongers or most importantly those which are closest to achieving a victory condition. This potential to equalise the playing field in the modern era should result in much more unpredictable games, with players needing to keep their wits about them throughout an entire playthrough and not just the crucial early stage – that's something *Civilization V* more than any other

"Having played around with the new World Congress mechanic, it's clear that this inclusion will have massive consequences"



entry in the series was in particular need of.

Gods & Kings refreshed the first half of the *Civilization V* experience and *Brave New World* successfully refreshes the second half making it a much more exciting and engaging experience. Both these expansions build on the core game's accessible mould transforming it into a more unpredictable and fascinating form. In sheer number terms, *Brave New World* packs in nine new civilizations, eight new wonders, and two new standalone scenarios, but with dramatic new gameplay additions and a hefty dollop of fan service, this expansion is certainly more than the sum of its parts. ■

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INTERVIEW

for *Civ V* and whatever might come after. . . You never know what the future will hold and you never know what's going to come out on console. The PlayStation 4 has that light built into the front of the controller, so you can apparently have very fine motor control of a cursor on a screen. You never know what that kind of stuff will hold in the future, but right now until stuff like that makes sense, we don't want to definitely do any streamlining [with the *Civ* franchise] and I don't think our fans want us to either.

***Civ Rev's* control mechanism fed directly into *XCOM* as well, so in a way you wouldn't have had the success with *Enemy Unknown*, unless you put the console UI work in with *Civ Rev*. With regards to the light on the PS4's DualShock controller, do you think that device could offer enough dexterity to rival a mouse?**

Unknown, we're sceptical right now. What we want to avoid is when you have a huge game of *Civ V* for example, you might have 50 military units on the map if you're playing a domination player. The nightmare scenario for us would be clicking the right trigger to select the next unit, moving him, and then clicking the right trigger and moving the next, etc. That'd be awful because right now the game requires you to zip all over, manipulating different units. Touch makes more sense to us than that, or any kind of tablet-driven stuff. *XCOM* was announced for the iPad and that kind of stuff is perfect, as even *Civ V* has that singular face point-and-click. When we converted that to Windows 8 touch that was perfect and a more natural fit [compared to consoles]. We haven't had a close look at any of the new hardware yet, but new platforms would have to make sense for our players and we wouldn't want to compromise our game to work on a console.

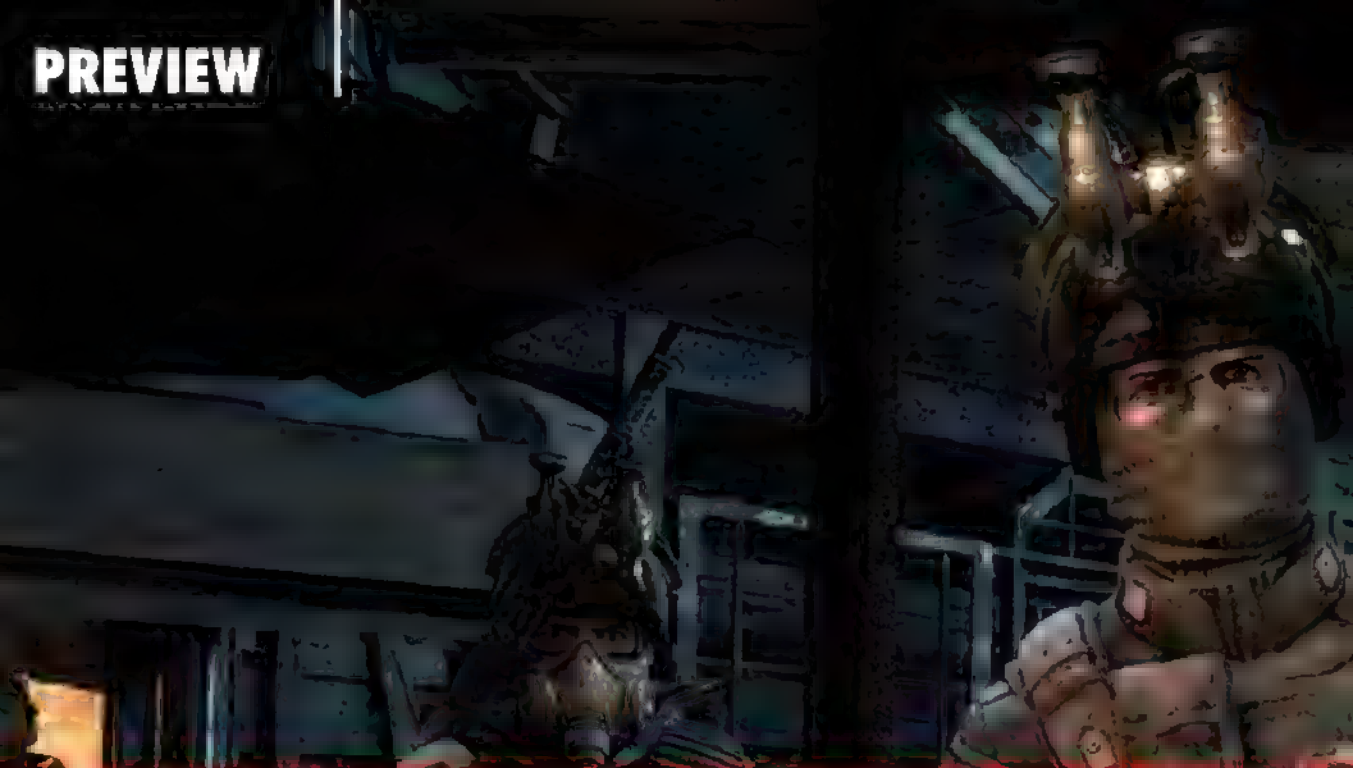
I'm glad you mentioned *XCOM*, as that series is coming into *Civilization* for the first time with *Brave New World*.

Well, a little bit. . .

As if to whet gamers' appetites! Would you consider adding some special scenarios to make the *XCOM* inclusion?

We have many ideas swirling through our heads all the time. We added the *XCOM* squad which is a Paratrooper upgrade, so the Skyraider is now in there and they can jet down and put their units out there. We're a few weeks out from Beta yet, and we're constantly discussing the possibility of putting a Sectoid in there. Not to necessarily add it into the core game, but riding along with the title so modders can create a strategic scenario.

They have the Skyraider, they've got the units and they have the aliens – now they can do whatever else they want to do and we want to see what they come up with. If we give them the tools, they'll make all kinds of cool stuff with that.



METRO: LAST LIGHT

PREVIEW

Survival horror with soul

Unfortunately some of life's great lessons are learnt too late. Case in point, THQ with the fantastic linear first-person shooter *Metro 2033*. A release a bit frayed around the edges for sure, boasting more bugs than your nearest butterfly farm, but in terms of atmosphere and mechanical brilliance, *Metro's* bleak post nuclear war world proved infinitely more interesting than the vast majority of other games out there, even giving *Half Life 2's* City 17 a run for its money in terms of bleakness and human suffering.

Look, what we're getting at is if THQ ploughed more money into promoting *Metro 2033* rather than

betting their future on developing the flawed uDraw tablet, then maybe they'd still be trading today.

This overriding thought offered up a tinge of sadness and regret as we considered our recent experiences with the substantially polished sequel *Metro: Last Light*, a game which has transferred wholesale from Toy HeadQuarters to the German publisher Deep Silver. It seems to be one of those rare sequels which simultaneously polishes up every aspect of the original game while dialling down further into what made *2033* so special in the first place.

For the benefit of the uninitiated, *Metro's* universe is based on the *Metro*



PUB: DEEP SILVER

DEV: 4A GAMES

LAST GAME

METRO 2033

PLATFORMS: PC, XBOX

360, PLAYSTATION 3


ETA: 17TH MAY

A character in a gas mask and tactical gear stands in a dark, industrial setting, possibly a subway station. The character is wearing a helmet with a gas mask and a vest with various pouches. The background shows structural elements of a tunnel and a window with a grid pattern.


2033 novel written by Dmitry Glukhovsky, which is set in the backdrop of a nuclear holocaust, with Moscow's abandoned underground network functioning as an arc protecting humanity from fatal levels of radiation. In both *2033* and *Last Light*, players assume the role of hardened survivor Artyom who with other gasmask-equipped warriors, labelled as Rangers, ventures overground to search for anything that may help the women, children and elderly below continue their difficult existence.

This promising setting translates to some fantastic survival horror gameplay. During quieter

"If THQ ploughed more money into promoting *Metro 2033* rather than betting their future on developing the flawed uDraw tablet, then maybe they'd still be trading today"



When walking around *Last Light*'s multitude of different underground stations, you'll view life carrying on as normal. Yes, this is normal.



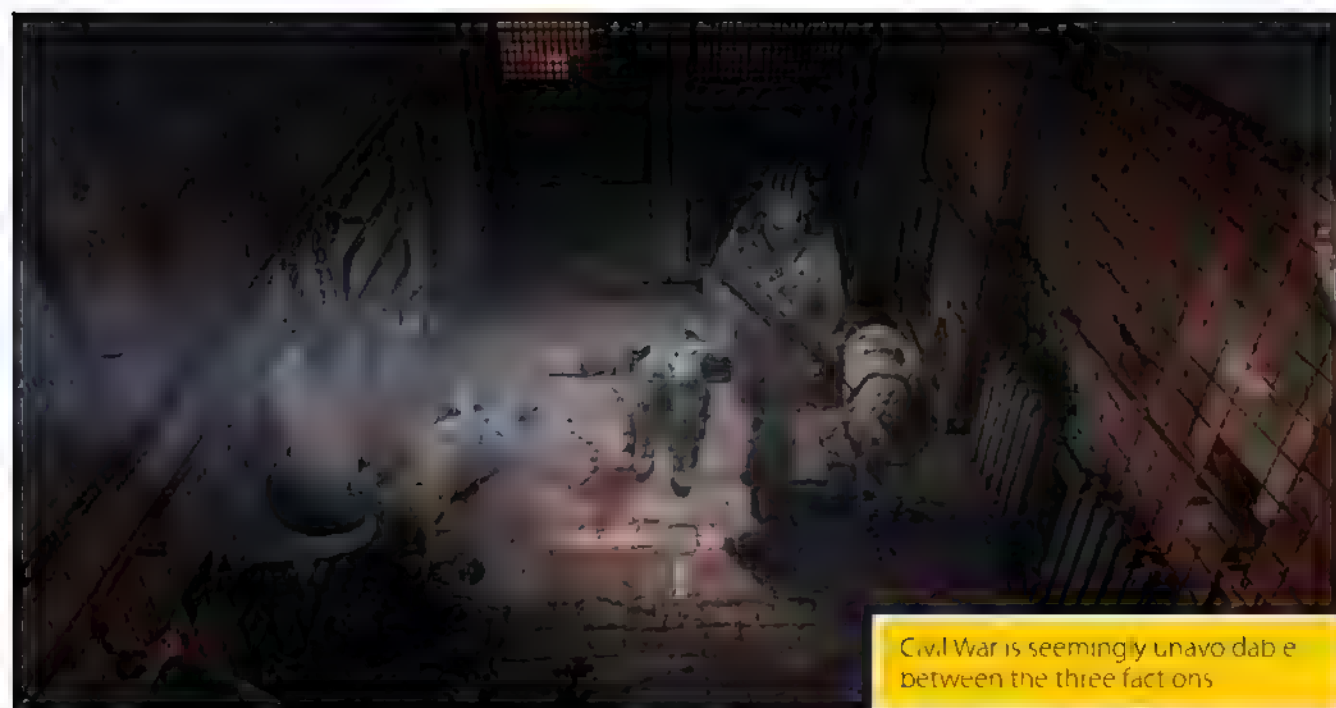
Every weapon in *Metro*'s universe is weighted in reality and feels mechanically plausible.

segments you'll venture underground exploring both populated and abandoned stations, mixing it up with fascists and communists fighting over who gets to rule this utterly ruined world and bearing witness to how regular citizens are struggling to survive by eating green mushrooms.

"Moscow is no longer just a land of grey death"

and harvesting cats for food, while the next you'll be battling hellish mutants above ground with heavily modified Steampunk rifles – all the while keeping a keen eye on your wristwatch ticking down making sure you don't run out of gasmask filters and expose yourself to the irradiated air.

These diametrically opposed components sum up *Metro*'s appeal in a nutshell: one claustrophobic and heavily story-based, while the latter proves a action-orientated and



Civil War is seemingly unavoidable between the three factions

traditional first-person shooter experience. That delicate gameplay balance hasn't altered.

In *Last Light* players still have the opportunity to take their time exploring Moscow's underground network, including a new station known as 'The Theatre' which boasts its own burlesque house, and interact with complicated characters, but the world overground has gone through a dramatic change, as nature slowly recovers from the effects of the war.

Grass is growing, flowers are blossoming. Moscow is no longer just a land of grey death. Mutants still litter the landscape, but the world is ready to be explored once again.


Against the backdrop of this renewal however, three factions vie for control of the underground: the communist Red Line, the Fourth Reich (guess which Führer they favour...) and the capitalist Hanseatic League. All three factions seek the spoils of a formerly hidden military bunker.




LAST TIME ON METRO

We were going to spoil the events of *Metro 2033* in this boxout via a short and snooty synopsis, but then we thought better of it. Instead we're just going to tell you to go play the original game. You'll get an additional insight into how Artyom evolves as a character and you'll get to meet the assuredly groovy antagonists known as 'The Dark Ones'. Most retailers are bundling *Metro 2033* and *Metro: Last Light* together so if you pre-order the sequel, the likelihood of you getting both games for one price is fairly high. The events of *Metro: Last Light* don't hinge on the original, but if you want the full experience you should really check it out. FYI, The PC version is the most superior version by some margin.





The 4A Engine has been heavily modded and optimized from the form seen in *Metro 2033*. Expect even better visuals this time around.



known as D6. This important location in both *Metro 2033* and *Last Light* holds the key to humanity's future, and each faction thinks raiding this spot will guarantee their long-term supremacy. Artyom plays a key part in this civil war and much like the original, ultimately the fate of the Metro

system will play into both this and, by extension, the player's hands.

MORE BUT BETTER

Throughout multiple preview days we've attended, 4A Games has drawn particular attention to the improvements they've made to



**ONCE MORE
UNTO THE METRO**

FirstLook | Preview

The Dark Ones are gone, but the Metro and the overground are still teeming with strange, mutated life forms



Metro's core combat mechanics. AI behaviour is more predictable and easier to understand, and the pace of combat has quickened, giving gun battles more of a responsive feel. There's still the option to stealth your way through levels by disabling lights and silently taking out enemies from behind, but by the same token weapons like the bolt action 'Valve'

"Last Light is every bit as special as its predecessor – only much tighter"

rifle or chaingun still allow players to engage enemies loud and proud.

The bullet-based economy has also been tweaked a bit. Not changed, we hasten to add, just explained in more detail, allowing players more opportunity to recognise that using grade-A bullets means that they kill enemies faster, but using this ammo may impact whether they can get

that shiny weapon upgrade later on.

Of all the sections we've witnessed during *Metro: Last Light's* development, be it that spooky foray into a downed 747 in the Moscow wilderness, prompting a nifty flashback to the plane being downed just as the Nukes hit Russia's capital, or the memorable return to the flooded Metro station known as 'Venice', what's clear is that *Last Light* is every bit as special as its predecessor – only tighter and more refined.

Who knows whether 4A Games' sequel would have saved THQ if it arrived a bit earlier, but in the grand scheme none of that really matters. What does matter is that *Metro: Last Light* is the kind of cerebral first-person shooter experience gamers the world over are crying out for.

If the likes of *BioShock* and *Half Life* floated then you should expect *Last Light* to make as big an impact in your game-paying psyche. ■

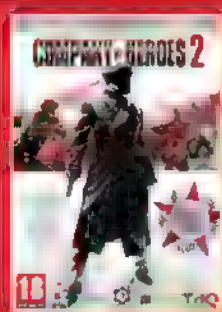


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COMPANY OF HEROES 2

MULTIPLAYER HANDS-ON



PUB: SEGA
DEV: RELIC ENTERTAINMENT
LAST GAME: WARHAMMER
40,000: SPACE MARINE
PLATFORMS: PC
ETA: JUNE 25TH

TWITTER



@CompanyHeroes
The battle for the Eastern Front has begun. The Company of Heroes 2 beta is now live on Steam.



@PreOrder-IQ
If you want to know what pre-order items come with select Company of Heroes 2 purchases, check our site.



@Sam Reven
Whoever composed the menu music for @companyofheroes 2's beta, he or she NAILED the Eastern Front atmosphere.



@Gradev
Just put in about a hour on the Company Of Heroes 2 Beta, that was fun, look forward to playing the real deal!



@GeezeNuff
So this Company of Heroes 2 beta came out of nowhere on my Steam. I take it as a gift from the server gods!

TWEET US @GAMERZINES

Learn by doing...

Playing any real-time strategy game against other players without having an idea of optimum build ratios and unit strengths is tantamount to self-flagellation. This stubborn trend is true of the *StarCraft* series and *Command & Conquer*, and it was the case with the original *Company of Heroes*. Sure, single-player campaigns usually do their part in making you feel prepared to flex your strategic muscle against real Generals online, but a few matches later it isn't unusual for players to retreat to their AI skirmish-only corner, damning their false confidence and promising to never venture online again. Thankfully Relic identify that this thinning out of the competitive RTS herd is a problem which negatively impacts the RTS genre, and with *Company of Heroes 2* they're doing something about it.

Even though the sequel's World War II setting has shifted from Europe to Russia, with Soviets forces against the Third Reich, *Company of Heroes 2*'s fundamental capture-point based gameplay hasn't really changed. Wins are still determined by ticking down an enemy's victory tally by owning the most victory points at any given time, and ammo and fuel accumulation (funding soldiers and tanks respectively) is still tied to owning other points around the map. There's still that mad scramble to own as many points as possible at the beginning of matches, but this time supremacy is less about pumping out as many units as possible, and instead using the ones you have wisely. The economy seems much more stretched.



*"Thankfully, Relic identify
that this thinning out of
the competitive RTS herd
is a problem"*

PREVIEW




Fire from tanks and artillery scars battlefields in a realistic manner—shattering ice, forming craters—and obliterating trees.

Players can watch matches immediately after they're over at multiple different speeds and any camera angle they wish.



than before, with players switching between infantry and light vehicles to tanks and heavy artillery at a more gradual pace. Like the historical reality of the Eastern Front, technology is expensive but manpower is alarmingly cheap for both sides, so sacrificing units willy-nilly is actively discouraged. The effects of this are two-fold. First, powerful units like Russia's terrifying Katushya Rocket Truck and Germany's Panzer tank are usually few in numbers, so it's relatively easy to take care of them, and secondly these units have an air of uneasy majesty to them as you see them lay waste to not only soldiers, but also giant sways of the landscape.

That's the other non-RTS fan hook *Company of Heroes II* has going for it: this RTS is a beautifully bleak and graciously violent experience. Artillery blows soldiers' limbs apart, ice creaks and breaks under tank-treads and soldiers left in the cold during blizzards actually lose health over time. Relic's *Essence 3.0 Engine* shows just enough of the



Points can only be captured by infantry and friendly artillery fire can hurt your own troops as well as the enemy

brutal destruction weapons of war can cause, but it never gets to the point where you think twice about sending a unit into slaughter.

The base gameplay and the attractiveness of the engine will certainly attract new or lapsed RTS players into the fold, but what'll make them stay after their first few losses is the effectiveness of post-battle report. This statistician's

"In every way that matters, Relic has refined the Company of Heroes formula"

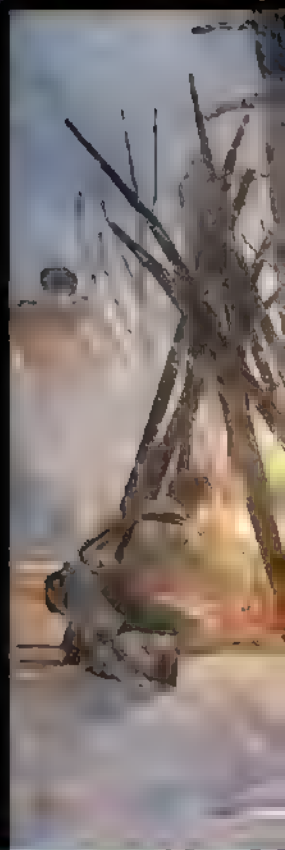
dream not only allows players to watch matches back with the ability to witness what the enemy was up to at any given time, but every action during said match is distilled into time-based action menus, economy graphs and unit-by-unit performance reports. All these tools prove invaluable in gaining an idea of where any given match got away from a player and the

graphs don't hide the important stuff like traditional RTS games do. Not only that but Relic have also introduced a *Call of Duty*-inspired progression mechanism with players unlocking more General profiles, unit skins and activity ribbons for activity both in the campaign, against the AI and other players so even disastrous matches won't constitute as a waste of time.

In every way that matters Relic has refined the *Company of Heroes* formula, making it a smarter and more accessible without limiting its complexity.

All these additional tools will help newbies get into the series more easily than ever before, while at the same time giving veterans more to think about.

Expect this series to take the RTS world by storm again, only this time everyone is invited to the strategy party. ■



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PREVIEW

GRID 2



PUB
DEV
LAST GAME
PLATFORMS
EVAL

In the original *GRID*, multiplayer racing was a bit of an afterthought. Sure you could race on any track using any car from the campaign, but it didn't really fit in with the rest of the game's emulation of worldwide motorsport. That hasn't stopped *GRID* still boasting an active online community five years after launch, but for the sequel Codemasters want to inspire a higher level of dedication.

We were fortunate to play this gorgeous racer for two glorious hours and frankly it was a blast. We sampled three out of the six different modes available in

GRID 2 – Endurance, Race, and Checkpoint – and we were not only surprised by how different each event felt, but also how much our driving mettle was tested in different ways.

*“Racing with
Liveroutes switched
on proves strange
yet exhilarating”*

The first event Endurance involved us tackling the Dubai circuit driving the superbly grippy Volkswagen Golf R challenging

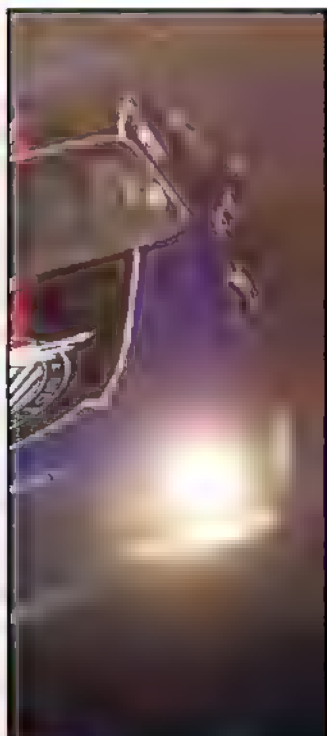


Aside from the inclusion of Indycar's Dallara DW12 and a selection of touring cars, *GRID 2*'s car list feels very production car focused – at least more so than the original

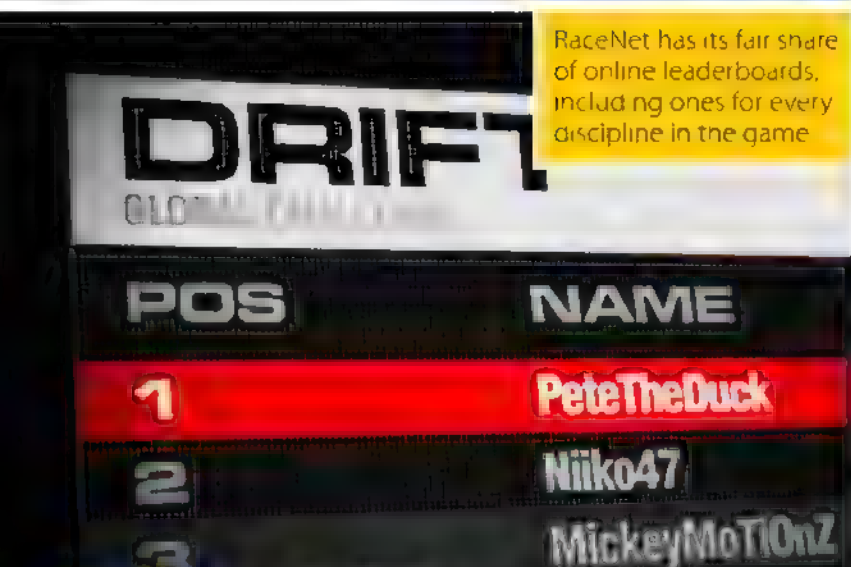
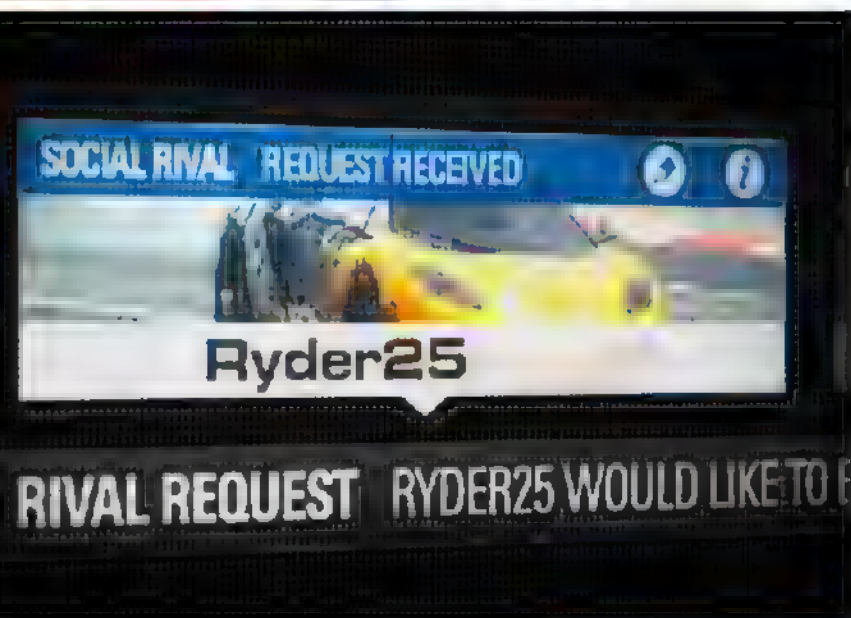
Subaru SR2s, Audi RS Coupes and other selections from the game's Tier 1 class. Now Endurance events are time-based races and can last as little as five minutes to 40, and when the optional Liveroutes functionality is switched on, this event type is incredibly tense.

Liveroutes is one of two new big innovations for *GRID 2*, and it's an entirely optional mechanic which changes the layout of *GRID 2*'s fictional tracks on a lap-to-lap basis. While racing on Dubai our straightforward first lap was much trickier second time around, as gradual left corners became sharp right-handers and that long

straight midway through the course was no longer followed by an easy kink, but a nasty handbrake-necessary hairpin. These sorts of on-the-fly changes come along with no warning, as the track silently morphs around the player with spectators, barriers and corner signage changing without any telltale indicators. Racing with Liveroutes switched on proves strange yet exhilarating, as you know you need to keep the pace up to stop others getting past, but at the same time driving recklessly will only lead to your finely tuned racing machine being flung into an assuredly



PREVIEW



RaceNet has its fair share of online leaderboards, including ones for every discipline in the game

solid metal barrier. At first Liveroutes feels weird as the transformative nature of tracks means it's really easy to lose your bearings during a lap, but then this unpredictability genuinely creates an 'edge of your seat' vibe as you need to keep all your wits about you for changes every corner. Simply put, Liveroutes is stimulating and a genuine innovation in the racing genre.

Next up we tried out a standard race with McLaren MP4 12-Cs, Audi RS3s and Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT3s on Portugal's real-life Algarve circuit. These Tier 3 cars were infinitely more powerful than their Tier 1 cousins with the McLaren prone to sudden bouts of snappiness, whereas the Audi stuck to the track like glue, responding to even the most stern demands during corners.

Each car in *GRID 2* is given a descriptor to communicate handling – Grip, Balance, and Drift. Their meaning is self-evident and the differences



between each of them are felt immediately on-track. *GRID 2*'s handling model is similar to the original game, with an tendency for all cars to have sudden bouts of oversteer when players tackle corners with too much speed, but it seems easier to man-handle cars now and pull them back moments before they spin out. Seasoned racers will feel

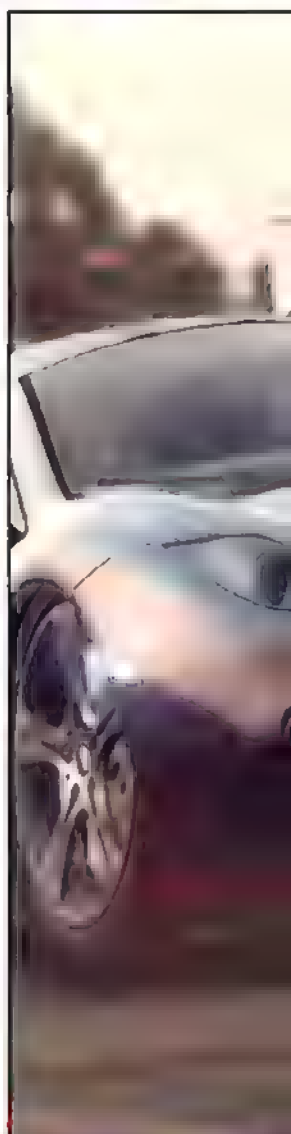
"Seasoned racers will feel when they're pushing a car too far"

when they're pushing a car too far and at what corners they can extract more – for an arcade racer the depth of this feedback is really impressive. Algarve with its varied gradient and steep curbing also showcased the newly improved physics model, with suspension feeling much freer and liable to flip one side of your car into the air when you feast on too much

kerb. The last event involved checkpoint racing around Paris with Tier 1 cars.

Completely absent from the first game, checkpoint mode in *GRID 2* involves a rolling staggered start with cars starting with a gap between each other and earning more time as they pass gates. Borrowed wholesale from *DiRT* this kind of racing means you have to navigate around slower competitors to set a fast time and be weary of any accidents – with the tight roads and sharp corners of Paris this proved particularly difficult.

For a racer that has accessibility at the forefront of its design, it was refreshing to tackle a track which wasn't short of its fair share of hairpins and tricky chicanes. This track proved to us definitively that to be quick in this racing sequel you need to master drifting around corners to maintain competitive speeds, as when we adopted the traditional brake early and power ➤



AI cars now bolster online events, if the 12 person player cap isn't met



out approach we got trounced by the opposition.

HIGHLY EVOLVED

No doubt *GRID 2* is certainly a different beast from its predecessor, with the fictional World Series Racing championship setting resulting in a much more streamlined and dare we say it 'Americanised' take on motorsport proceedings, but the on-track action remains just as thrilling. Thankfully the multiplayer side of this sequel focuses on what *GRID* has always done best – competitive, contact-heavy racing.

Codemasters are also packaging the immensely promising RaceNet framework with *GRID 2*. This ubiquitous multiplayer portal is a bit like *Need for Speed's* Autolog only boasting more options for players to customise their experience, with human rivals both automatically attributed to players to encourage asynchronous competition,

via leaderboards, in addition to choosing those you want to compete with directly, be it friends or randoms met online. Every week up to nine new challenges will be added to the game as well, with leaderboards, XP and money bonuses associated with each, allowing every gamer an opportunity to top the charts.

Progression regarding car unlocks and game modes is separate from the single-player campaign, but that's to ensure that players don't feel obligated to navigate through the campaign if all they're interested in is racing against human competition. Unlike the original *GRID*, there's also the option to play two-player split-screen mode in this sequel across all formats, with AI players filling out the rest of the grid. Codemasters have pretty much thought of everything.

RaceNet isn't just a superfluous matchmaking system though, as it'll also be tied directly into an online portal



Getting past other drivers in Checkpoint mode is really tricky as you need to pass quickly and cleanly to lose the least amount of time

viewable from PCs, phones and tablets, with users able to view detailed community statistics, keep track of their rival's progress and find out what new multiplayer events have been added to the game. Whether this functionality will boast enough detail to stay relevant remains to be seen, but Codemasters

"Codemasters have pretty much thought of everything in GRID 2"

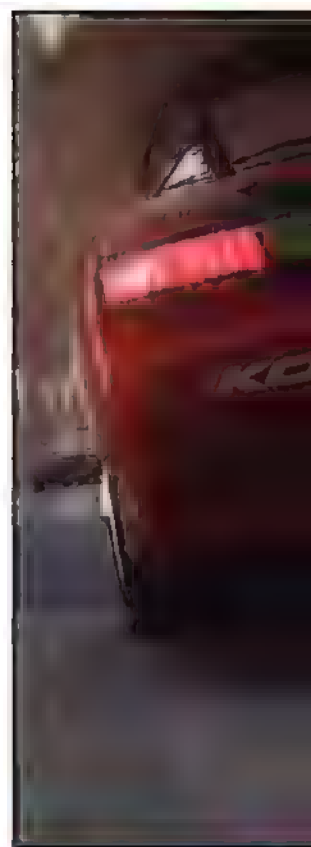
has also introduced a collision rating system to matchmaking and a speed-stealing anti-corner cutting measure, so they are altering the nuts and bolts of multiplayer as well as the social side, too.

The collision rating could change getting many more hardened racers involved too, as in custom matches players can

elect to race with those who have a clean rating – hopefully eliminating those annoying first corner race-ending incidents.

We're also shown the overhauled car customisation system, with players still restricted to pre-determined patterns and an expanded list of sponsors, and there's also a new car upgrades system as well which enables players to upgrade their favourite cars to fit more competitive tiers, with fatter tyres, meatier spoilers and more aggressive tuning automatically applied to their form.

Across the board *GRID 2* seems like a glossier, more accessible take on the pan-world motorsport concept which dominated the first game but when it comes to multiplayer this series has evolved substantially. So much so that it's almost unrecognisable. ■



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DEAD ISLAND: RIPTIDE

THE NEVER-ENDING



PC
DEV
LAST GAME
PLATFORMS
RTA

If there's one franchise out there that proves sometimes critics get it wrong, it's *Dead Island*. The *Skyrim* meets *Dead Rising* first person survival horror game was derided at launch for its game-breaking bugs, forgettable story, poorly written dialogue and bizarre animations, but against all odds Techland's release became a hit, selling over five million copies, and attracting a devoted fan-base.

Many criticisms were thrown at *Dead Island* on release in 2011, yet developer Techland didn't panic or run away from the challenge in front of them. Instead they calmly took into consideration feedback

from fans and critics alike and patched the game time and time again, allowing its rickety form to blossom into the kind of four-player co-op action game players were promised, and as time went

"This is a game which plays up the worst of B-movie horror archetypes"

on the number of *Dead Island* fans grew substantially.

It's important to keep this franchise's troubled beginnings



in mind when playing *Riptide*, as in many ways this is the kind of polished experience we were promised in the first place with a few new features chucked into the zombie genocide mix for good measure. Despite the setting shifting from the tourism-friendly island of Banoi to the more tribal Palana, *Riptide* feels more like a spin-off than a sequel.

The four survivors from the first game return, along with a military newcomer named John Morgan, but gameplay still involves the repetitive killing of zombies, travelling around the tropical open world at your leisure and

completing mundane fetch quests for poorly voiced NPCs.

Getting hung up on *Riptide*'s rougher than rough elements isn't really in the spirit of things though, as Techland aren't trying to create something as story-driven as the likes of *BioShock* or even *The Walking Dead*. Instead this is a game which plays up the worst of B-movie horror archetypes, such as an evil military corporation trying to harvest the zombie virus for themselves, a street talking rapper with little more to add to proceedings than a passion for violence, and worst of all the predictable time based threat of >



PREVIEW

Palana isn't a million miles away from Banol, both physically and tonally.



a nuclear warhead heading to island to cleanse the infection for good. While playing on your own these thinly veiled tropes grind, but when playing with friends they become funny and almost add to *Riptide's* adorable charm. Techland's love of the source material is clear, and despite the plot's hackneyed attempts to create some resonance of drama with lengthy cut-scenes and tension-filled dialogue, it's hard not to be swept up in the developer's enthusiasm.

Weapons, no matter how seemingly sturdy they are, still break at an annoyingly frequent rate and much of *Dead Island's* appeal is still based around hunting around the island looking for blueprints and putting together said imaginatively violent constructions into good use.

Fighting zombies at the most basic level still remains just as fun, with players able to disable specific limbs, cut off heads and chuck weapons so they get



Players can import in their old *Dead Island* characters, if they don't feel like starting afresh



Despite relocating to a new island, zombies in *Riptide* still think it's okay to stick their oar in...

embedded in zombie torsos. It's still very much numbers-based, with critical hits and random dice rolls determining whether that machete thrown into a zombie's head will get stuck or slice it clean off, but the action is immediate enough that the back-end calculation doesn't effect the crunchy combat.

"Techland has adopted a safe approach when it comes to designing Riptide"

Techland has also added the ability for characters to utilise new combat moves which tests players mastering of the stamina system even more. The standard push-kick is joined by the ability to stomp on zombie skulls and drop on them from an elevated positions for instant kills. Other notable inclusions involve using

boats as a new form of transport, and the ability to upgrade a fellow survivor's combat rating by completing new resource-gathering side-quests for them.

Dead Island's emergence in 2011 was so bad that it endangered the future of the series, so it's no wonder that Techland has adopted a safe approach when it comes to *Riptide*. This spin-off/standalone expansion sticks to the rules established by the original rather than shifting up the fundamental *Dead Island* experience, but with so many gamers out there hankering for more zombie killin' action, that's perfectly okay.

If you're looking for another zombie-filled paradise to plunder with three other friends, *Riptide* has your back with a content-rich and assuredly violent co-op experience for one and all. ■



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LESSONS TO LEARN FROM

Last month *BioShock Infinite* was released to an eager public after almost every critic under the sun gave it near enough a perfect score. No doubt Irrational Games' latest is truly something special, but more than that, the third game in the *BioShock* series has some important lessons to teach both gamers and developers, as it genuinely forges new ground in the bloated FPS genre.

Before we get into that though, let's get the ugly stuff out of the way first: this article will contain spoilers and if you don't want to know anything about *BioShock Infinite* we suggest you stop reading now. Experiencing this release with as little

knowledge as possible is undoubtedly the best way to play, but if you're still undecided on whether you want to visit the sky city of Columbia read on.

Much like *Inception*, *BioShock Infinite* shows that having a big budget doesn't mean you aim your experience at the lowest common denominator. Lofty themes like the nature of self, racism, ultra-nationalism, determinism and lots of other -isms are tackled or at least heavily alluded to during the ten-hour campaign, but much of it is up to players to discover for themselves via Voxophones and Kinectoscopes spread around the world. This formula has been seen before, but what's new

Elizabeth's evolution during the game parallels that of the player.



BIO SHOCK

INFINITE

about these visual and audio diaries is the length and breadth of topics covered within them. Authored by key characters in the story, they

"If you don't want to know anything about BioShock Infinite we suggest you stop reading now"

simultaneously flesh out the world's history and cast new light on themes alluded to by the

characters, but they feel important enough to be worth the player's time searching them out and they even contain major plot points which for hidden items and optional world details is novel.

To build a world which gamers care about requires there to be enough tertiary information for players to naturally discover, and Columbia has this in spades. In the story stakes more always means more, and with Ken Levine at the helm it's unsurprising that *BioShock Infinite's* narrative boasts such complex themes, but it's impossible to forget the other 250+ developers behind the game. This beautiful experience was in development for five



infinite feels like a *BioShock* game, but it evolves into so much more than that towards the end



The campaign is intensely character-driven but actually features little dialogue

years and is estimated to cost in excess of \$100 million to produce (according to the *New York Times*) so this amount of attention to detail and developer expertise certainly isn't cheap. Past failures like *Duke Nukem Forever* and *APB* have shown that chucking money at a project doesn't always yield positive results, but in *BioShock Infinite's* case the alleged development budget was spent purely on producing a compelling single-player campaign and nothing else, and the results of this laser-like focus are obvious for all to see.

Another major component of *Infinite's* appeal is Elizabeth herself. As she's part of the player's journey from very early in the game, starting in an innocent, dare we say it naïve form, she becomes an analog of both the story and the player. Her complaints, anger and physical deformities she earns as the campaign grows reflects on Columbia's downfall itself. She's a constant reminder of what the player has been through and provides an emotional motivation to strive on. In the AI companion stakes Irrational do cheat with Elizabeth's implementation, as you can't interact in the typical RPG manner of dialogue trees and exposition, but she does help you in battles by pulling in aid and chucking ammo and health in your direction – so it's easy for even the most independently minded of players to come to appreciate her near-constant presence. She's

both subservient and substantially stronger than the player, picking locks to safes at the player's request one minute and opening portals to other dimensions the next, so she's both useful and critical to the campaign going forward. In basic AI buddy terms, her functionality is simple and 99% of the time scripted, as she can't die, directly hurt

"The beauty and inherent complexity of Columbia shines on regardless"

enemies or really do anything without player prompting, yet despite all that she prompts players to care about her – which for a game which boils down to a 10-hour escort mission is rather impressive. So in story terms more is more, but in AI terms, as Elizabeth proves, less is undoubtedly more.

Choosing a novel previously unseen setting is also a massive string to *BioShock Infinite's* bow. Sky cities aren't new, especially in games, but melding that setting with a pre-Great War time period gives Columbia a familiar historical feel, while simultaneously offering a fantastical slant. Sure the reasons Irrational uses to excuse its existence falls under typical sci-fi mumbo jumbo but the beauty

It's impossible
not to care for
Elizabeth's plight



and inherent complexity of Columbia manages to shine on regardless.

The last lesson is probably the most important, and it's one that games gloss over time and time again: endings matter. Don't believe that bullhockey about the 'journey being the important thing'. Try telling that to the thousands of gamers out there who thought BioWare screwed the pooch when it came to concluding the *Mass Effect* trilogy. People care about endings, especially when it comes to sequels, and *BioShock Infinite's* is one of the best of any medium. The reasons behind its effectiveness aren't down to a single revelation or moment, instead it's the way the campaign's pacing picks up towards the end, chucking key plot point after key

plot point at the player until their head begins to swirl as they process it all.

Getting this final impression right is crucial as it means players feel inflated going away from the experience rather than disappointed. Great endings have far-reaching consequences and stay with those that experience them long after they last sample the source. *BioShock Infinite's* comes under that heading and is one of the rarest of rare in game terms, as it not only alludes to a much wider theatre going on independent of the player, but it also gives characters closure in a meaningful way.

BioShock Infinite's lessons vary from obvious to revelatory, but we have a feeling its influence will echo in the games industry for years to come.

Infinite is an immensely violent game but it all serves the setting Irrational has created



Upcoming DLC & UGC

Uncharted 3: Multiplayer



PUB:
 DEV:
 OUT NOW

Sony's games division are getting braver. First they unveil the PlayStation 4 without any care of showing their cards early, and over the past month they've made the multiplayer component of *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* free-to-play.

Players don't need to own the full game to get involved with Naughty Dog's entertaining third-person hooter, instead they just need to download the free client from the PlayStation Network. And to top it all off, the first bit of DLC for the game is dedicated the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals month. All throughout

April there will be lots of special hats, shirts, skins and guns available from the in-game store, with all purchases contributing to a fund which will be donated to an unknown animal charity. Way to go Naughty Dog! ■



rFactor: TOC Clio Cup



DEV: Touring F
 FIND IT: Touring F
 STARTED MARCH, 2013

We're a massive British Touring Car Championship fans here at *FirstLook*, so it was inevitable that the third season of *Touring Pro Series' Virtual Clio*



Championship was going to catch our eye. Thanks to a partnership with real-life BTCC competitors Team-HARD, the staple of the sim-racing scene is being renamed as The Tom Onslow-Cole Clio Series, with the grand prize involving not only one-to-one tuition from the titular driver, but also a test drive of a real-life BTCC VW Golf.

Unfortunately it's too late to join the series now, but the series runs until August and interested parties can watch the entertaining races play out via TPS' YouTube feed. If you've never watched simracing before, this series is a great starting point. ■

Torchlight II

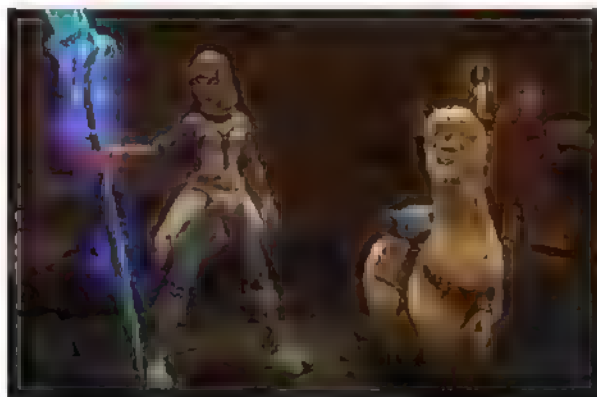


PUB: P
DEV:
FIND IT:
OUT NOW

Runic Games has finally added mod support to their gargantuan dungeon crawler, *Torchlight II*. Now in typical style, the studio didn't just add Steamworks support and let their community do the rest of the work. Instead they've added new loot items for every class, new dungeons to the campaign and four new pets for players to choose from – a noble stag, a plump panda, an adorable alpaca and for some reason, a headcrab from *Half-Life*.

Torchlight II was supposed to have Steamworks support months ago, so really this content is a means of Runic saying sorry for the delays. That said, this free update is still

very generous and the community has already put together a host of great content including more skins for the new pets and a mod that raises the online game limit from four players to eight. ■

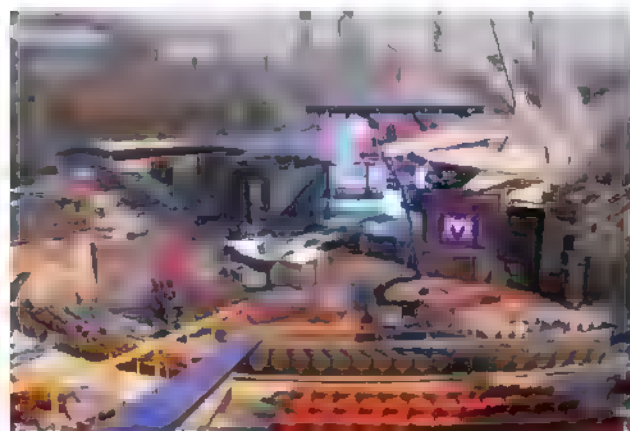


CoD: Black Ops 2 Uprising



PUB: A
DEV:
OUT NOW
(Xbox 360 only)

The second set of *Black Ops 2* DLC was launched for Xbox 360 this past month. According to Treyarch's David Vonderhaar, this set of DLC is the most



diverse the studio has put together to date. Uprising features four new competitive multiplayer maps and a new zombie map set on Alcatraz starring *Goodfellas*' Ray Liotta, *The Usual Suspects*' Chazz Palminteri, Tarantino-favourite Michael Madsen and *The Soprano*'s Joe Pantoliano – are you sensing a theme here?

Microsoft's exclusivity deal with Activision regarding *Black Ops 2* DLC is still in effect, so PlayStation 3 and PC fans will have to wait until later this month, or potentially next month, to get their mitts on it. The rate of content being released for *CoD* shows no signs of slowing down with fans ever-hungry for more. ■

Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon

DLC

PUB: Ubisoft
DEV: Ubisoft
Montreal
ETA: 1st May

As one of the most widely praised releases of last year, it's only natural that Ubisoft would want to cash-in on *Far Cry 3* with a new expansion, but in our wildest dreams we didn't imagine that Ubisoft Montreal would put together something so starkly different as this. *Blood Dragon* is a digital-only shooter set in the backdrop of cyber 80's sci-fi.

This standalone spin-off stars aging action hero Michael Biehn (*Terminator*, *Aliens*, *The Rock*) and simplifies the XP mechanic of *Far Cry 3* creating a much faster and

accessible experience. All of the sombre tones of the base game are gone, but players still explore a giant open-world full of wildlife and outposts that need to be liberated from an evil dystopian faction. Who says Ubisoft are predictable huh? ■



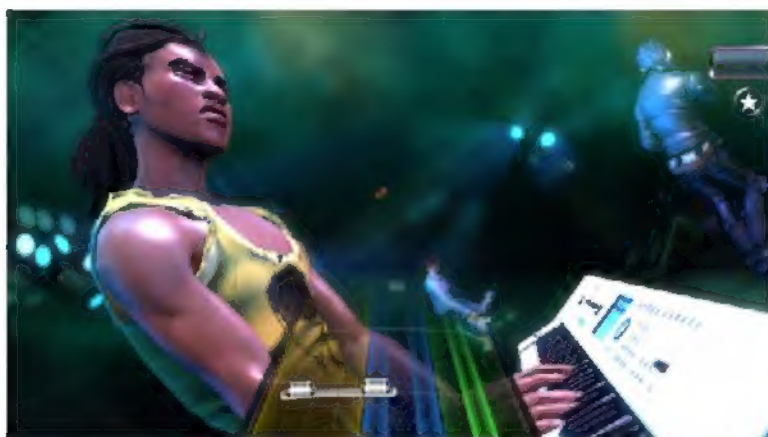
Rockband

DLC

PUB: MTV Games
and EA
DEV: Harmonix
OUT NOW

The music game fad officially ended last month as Harmonix put out the last bit of DLC for the beloved *Rockband* series. In total the studio put out 4,000 tracks

from 1,400 different artists in the official *Rockband* store and the last song to hit the service was suitably enough Don McLean's *American Pie*.



A lot of the licensing for the songs on the service aren't long from expiring, so if you still occasionally drag out those plastics instruments and jam with your buddies, we recommend you grab any songs from the *Rockband* store you fancy before the disappear forever. Five years ago rhythm games were all the rage, but now their reign has passed. Thanks for the memories Harmonix. ■

Doom 3: Prometheus



DEV: Bladeghost
FIND IT: ModDB
ETA: May

Distilling the startlingly confusing and disappointing feature film *Prometheus* into a new single-player campaign for *Doom 3* is one of those ideas which gets better every time we hear it. Sure the plot of



the film was nonsense at times, with key characters swaying from learned scientists to bumbling buffoons from one scene to the next, but those failings are a bit easier to forgive when you have the opportunity to explore the film's admittedly stunning scenery and ship designs for yourself. The only pitfall could be the lack of any support or permissions from license holder 20th Century Fox, who could chuck a cease and desist at the creator at any time, but let's be honest they probably aren't going to do anything with *Prometheus'* IP anyway. Here's hoping this mod sees the light of day very soon. ■

Crysis 2: Blackfire's Mod



DEV: Blackfire
FIND IT: ModDB
OUT NOW

The CryEngine 3 is already capable of producing amazing sights for PC gamers to savour, but sometimes even the almighty Crytek need a helping hand from fans when it comes to getting the most out of their work. Case in point, the *Blackfire* mod for *Crysis 2* which clears the foggy haze which permeates the entire sequel allowing environments to breathe and be savoured by those viewing them.

Granted, this isn't the most impactful mod in the world, but sometimes games don't need a total conversion in order to be

improved. Sometimes all a game needs is a new lighting system to allow environments to shine a-new. You can grab the *Blackfire* mod from ModDB right now. ■

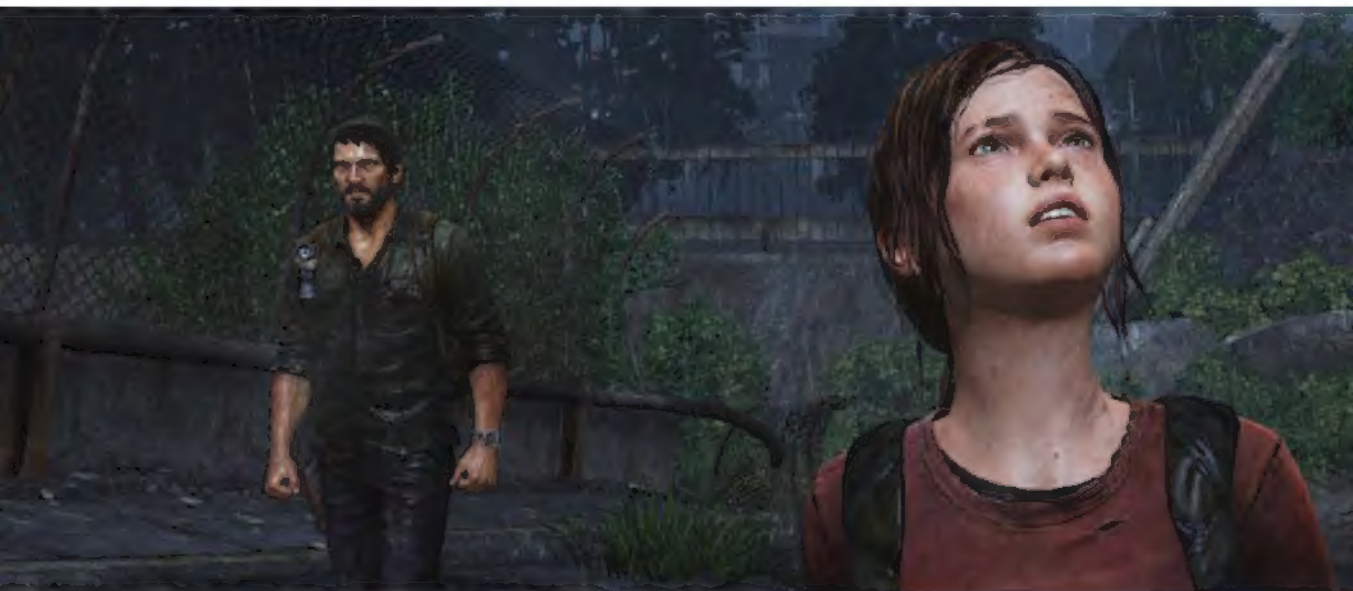


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LOST PLANET 3

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